

A GUIDE TO AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Avoid Plagiarism
Derive Carefully!

PLAGIARISM

Regulations

Plagiarism is a serious matter and may affect your eligibility for a degree.

The University regulations regarding Cheating and Plagiarism are incorporated in the Regulations for the Awards of the University's Degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy, section 15. Please refer to this for the procedural information governing allegations of plagiarism.

Plagiarism - a definition

Plagiarise - to steal from the writings or ideas of another¹

The writings and ideas of others form an important part of academic work. The work of others, however, must be clearly identifiable and distinguished from your original writings and ideas. Failure to acknowledge properly the work of others is plagiarism, whether or not you intended to represent the work as your own.

How to avoid plagiarising the writings of another

To avoid any possible allegation of plagiarism being made about your thesis it is important to learn how to represent the writings of another person properly. A short section of text that is taken from another's work and is unchanged must appear within quotation marks with an acknowledgement being given to the original work. A larger section of text that is quoted should also be indented. An acknowledgement should appear either as a footnote or by the addition of the author's name and the year of the publication in the text, with the full citation being referenced. References should be detailed enough to allow anyone reading the thesis to locate the original work to the exact page/paragraph where it appears. If you do not reference adequately you may intentionally, or unintentionally (inadequate note taking of text referred to is no excuse!), be seen to be "passing off" another person's writings as your own, which is a breach of the laws governing copyright, the University regulations and academic practice.

Each discipline and subject area has its own requirements regarding references, citations, reading lists, quotations etc and your Director of Studies is best placed to advise you on an acceptable style.

[The University Library publishes a Citation Guide which details the different acceptable styles of referencing.]

¹ Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary, Revised Edition, 1971, p831

Another way to avoid plagiarising another person's work is to paraphrase text, ideally referring to the original author by name. The paraphrased version should, however, be sufficiently removed from the original version so that obvious copying, with only minor changes being made to the text, does not occur. Where little attempt is made to paraphrase text, and the original author is not acknowledged, this can still be regarded as plagiarism. It should also be noted that paraphrasing does not allow you to develop a personal writing style and phrases which appear to be out of context or style within your thesis are more likely to be checked by a supervisor or an examiner as possible plagiarised text.

You should also remember that when your supervisor, or an examiner, reads your thesis, he/she is an expert in your subject area and well acquainted with the texts that you may have consulted. Any similarity between sections in your thesis and the well known texts within your discipline is likely to be recognised.

How to avoid plagiarising the ideas of another

Where another author has brought forward a novel idea or concept, and this is incorporated in your thesis, the idea of the original author, even when paraphrased, should be referenced. The idea still belongs to the original author and thus should be acknowledged. **Not to acknowledge the original ideas of others is plagiarism.**

This is quite a technical aspect of plagiarism to grasp so a practical example may assist.

In the introduction to Wilkie Collins' 'The Moonstone', Anthea Trodd states,

“Collins is simply unexcited by imperial prospects and military exploits.”²

This idea belongs to Anthea Trodd and so, even if this is paraphrased to, for example,

‘Collins shows an indifference to the empire building and military campaigns of the mid-Victorian age.’

this is still plagiarism if no acknowledgement is given to Anthea Trodd who originally thought this of Collins' work. Adding (Trodd, 1998, p xviii) avoids this problem.

² Trodd, Anthea (1982) Introduction. In: Collins, Wilkie, 'The Moonstone', Oxford University Press, reprinted 1998, p xviii

Other useful publication

You may find the book by Jankowicz, A D, 'Business Research Projects', Chapman and Hall, London, 1995, p82, a useful text for information on note taking and paraphrasing.